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ABSTRACT

Not only is industry seeking a closer relationship with the community college, but employees themselves are becoming more interested in making career advances or mid-career changes. The Metropolitan Community Colleges of Kansas City, Missouri, have become aware of these changing educational needs through the realization that 2% of the students enrolled in Fall 1980 had previously earned a baccalaureate degree or higher, and through a marketing study. This study revealed, among other findings, that: (1) most area firms employed fewer than 10 persons: (2) the colleges had provided instruction and services to 372 different firms from 1975 through 1978: and (3) programs in management training, office skills, and personal development were the most popular. As a result of this study, several new programs were developed in the district, including "Brown Bag" courses conducted during the lunch hour: a non-traditional associate of arts program for adult, part-time students: a re-entry, counseling, and orientation program for new adult students: and a contractual arrangement to provide instruction at a local retirement community. Of special significance is the fact that the development of these non-traditional programs was mandated in a lifelong education policy statement issued by the District's Board of Trustees, who used their policy-making authority to insure that the colleges had the flexibility and ability to support the unique services that incoming adult students need and deserve. (JP)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE RELATIONS WITH INDUSTRY

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE RELATIONS WITH INDUSTRY

William D. Hatley

Association of Community College Trustees Conference
April 13, 1981

Community colleges in the 80's will be expanding their services to meet the growing requirements of American industry. There is nothing unusual or surprising about this statement for, in truth, community colleges for the past 60 years have worked with and developed programs of study which have been consistent with the needs of business and industry.

What makes the statement important today is the widely held recognition of the trend toward industrial education and that it has become identified as the most important thrust in the life of the community college itself.

We are definitely coming into a new era in the 1980's.

To educators, the really interesting part of this unfolding phenomena is that not only is industry seeking increased relationship with the community college, but that the employees themselves seem to be interested in making career advancements or significant mid-career changes.

Peter Drucker, writing in the Wall Street Journal in March, 1981, expressed the unqualified opinion that demand for education is going up, not down. He discusses learning style and the need for non-traditional methods of education because of the pressure for continuing education. He states that an entire new "tier" of students are beginning to appear in the 1980's. This group of students

is not the traditional undergraduate or graduate student but rather a well defined body of mid-career adults who seek professional continuing education. These are students who are for the most part presently part of the industrial work force.

A count of the students from the Metropolitan Community College District in the Fall of 1980 revealed that over 2 percent of our entire student body already had earned degrees at the baccalaureate level or better. The figure, which frankly was a surprise to us, pinpointed very well what Drucker is saying. Over 600 of our students were taking courses for on-the-job advancements or were actively engaged in mid-career change. This phenomena has important implications for the relationship between the community colleges and industry. Clearly, there is a need for closer cooperation and planning. If the work force of our communities is to become more skilled, better trained in human relationships, and with a broader base of the understandings of a burgeoning technology, we had better begin seriously to spell out mutual objectives and long range goals.

We have begun this work in Kansas City. The work of closer cooperation with industry did not begin with a well thought out plan but rather came about gradually as a spinoff of a marketing study which we made in 1978.

Following the enrollment problems of the mid 70's the four colleges of the Metropolitan system took a very hard and critical look at itself. It was a painful experience because we were determined to do it thoroughly and objectively. We did not want, as my friend Nolen Ellison from Cleveland has said, to be caught merely rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

We examined our program offerings, including those courses and activities which we had recently conducted with the business and industry of our service area.

In our study we addressed three basic questions:

1. Who do we serve in the business and industrial community?
2. What do we offer them?
3. What do we do best?

For the purposes of the study we looked at what we had done with firms during the years 1975 through 1978. We made some interesting discoveries. First, we found that there were 18,140 firms located within our District boundaries in 1978. What surprised us was that of these 18,000 firms, 14,000 of them hired fewer than 10 employees. Actually, 12,000 of them hired less than 5 workers. It was a graphic demonstration that we are, in truth, a nation of small businesses. Further research revealed that in our entire nation there were only 7,500 industries which hire more than 500 employees, a critical lesson for community colleges which need large classes in order to be cost effective. Using the Standard Industrial Classification system as an index we looked at the types of firms which we had served over the three year period.

We were astonished to find that from 1975 through 1978 we had done business with 372 different firms ranging from government offices to amusement parks. We had offered the firms over 500 different courses and activities.

These courses were then examined by categories and we discovered that we had offered instruction in mid-management training, office skills and supervision, developmental skills such as speed reading and communication, and a wide variety of specialized services. Because of how well we had performed, our highest grades came in the areas of management training, office skills and personal development. During the three years there had been significant numbers of requests to repeat programs in these categories.

We noted that our repeat business came from firms which hired more than 25 employees. For the first time we had a comprehensive look at what our colleges were doing, with whom and how well among the businesses and industry of our area. We pinpointed their locations, grouped them by zip code areas, and entered names and addresses into our computer master file. In spite of the press of time we sampled over 1100 of the larger firms in our area, obtaining from them their perceptions of our colleges and preferences for offerings. Once we had digested our data we assigned firms to the college which had served them in the past or to the college which could best serve newly stated needs. In as many cases as possible a personal visit was made by the president of the assigned college to the place of business. The personal contacts were time consuming and after a year they are still in progress.

But out of the segmented marketing scheme grew a number of spinoff activities and attitudes. "Brown bag" courses were scheduled at two of our colleges, offering a chance for interested employees to perfect skills or pursue

personal interests during lunch hour. So successful was the program that Penn Valley Community College started a "Before Work College" with classes scheduled early in the morning for those who wish to stop by on their way to work.

During this same period we developed, along with several unions, a program package directed toward the new adult learner. We call it PACE, an acronym for Program for Adult College Education. Modeled after the Wayne State program, it offered the working adult the opportunity to complete a two-year associate in arts degree through non-traditional studies. The program incorporates television courses, weekend college and is built on the block learning system which embodies concentrated study in one discipline at a time. Classes are held in various locations and a group of PACE students returned recently from a study tour of the Soviet Union.

When the PACE Program was first proposed, most of us were skeptical that there would be enough adults interested in liberal arts and issues which affect their lives. We are no longer skeptical. Longview Community College began the program with 29 adults; there are now, after only one year, close to 300 students enrolled in the PACE Program.

If ever there was a clear example of adults clamoring for non-traditional continuing education, the PACE Program would be it.

We are learning the same lesson about the new adult student from our Re-Entry Program. We find a growing number of men who come through our Re-Entry Counseling and Orientation Program. Men who are seeking either career changes in mid life or who are pursuing skills updating or even following a personal interest. Many of the people identified as Re-Entry students are employees in the labor force.

There are also senior citizens who are seeking continuing education to help enrich their lives and to stimulate their still-active minds. Most are not in the labor force, but there are hundreds and thousands of senior citizens who still impact on the economic climate of the community in which they reside. They often need special attention from administrations and boards of trustees.

The kind of attention which is needed brings me to the main point of this presentation.

As community college board members, you are already aware of the changes which are taking place in the characteristics of our students. Our students are older, most are working full time, most are married and the vast majority of them are part-time students carrying fewer than 9 hours of credit. More and more women are returning to college to make a career decision or to improve job skills in order to ascend industrial management ladders which are now being made available to them.

You are aware of the change.

Perhaps what you as board members don't know is how you can help your community college adjust to this new student and help improve relationships with business and industry.

The problem is complex but it also has a solution. As policy setters, you have the opportunity to make sure that your college, through policy, has flexibility and will support the unique services which the incoming students needs and deserves.

As an example, at the March meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Metropolitan Community College District, our Board adopted a policy 6.0023 entitled Lifelong Education. I would like to read it to you.

> The changing demography and lifestyle of our society must be recognized in assessment of educational needs. Lifelong educational opportunities will be offered to meet the needs of all ages of students including those in the late twenties and beyond who need further education to cope with the growing complexities of earning a living and being a competent participant in their community. The Chancellor will establish procedures for the provision of a flexible curriculum which provides lifelong educational opportunities.

The Board, in its wisdom, has given me a special tool to improve the relationship between the college and the business community through the student. At the same meeting the Board approved a service contract between our colleges and a senior citizen retirement community, permitting us to provide special instructional services under a contract rate. Without the contract we could not have provided these services.

There are many other examples of special board interest and support in working with major employers in our service area. The Western Electric Computer/ Data Processing Training Program, work with Farmland Industries and Mobay Chemicals have been put in place through direct interest on the part of our Board members.

In working with small businesses in the future I will be looking to the support of our Board in establishing consortium contractual arrangements which will permit the grouping of employees in cost effective educational offerings.

If our nation is to survive the 80's, and we certainly will survive, our many small businesses with fewer than 5 employees will be required to become more efficient. This economic necessity plus the growing number of adults in our work force who are seeking continuing education can provide the community colleges with the spark which is needed to revitalize and solidify the direction in which the trends of the 80's seem to be taking us. We look to our Boards of Trustees to be aware of change and to support our efforts to meet the challenges which go with change.

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